

## ADVENTURE IN SLOVENIA

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*Perl Poep Sa Nim led the first Kwan Um School of Zen retreat in Slovenia, on October 1, 1998. This is her report on the experience.*

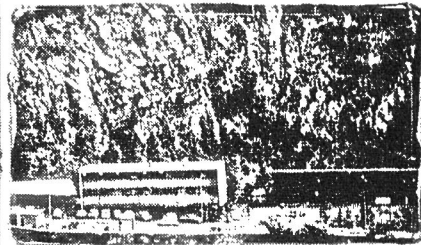
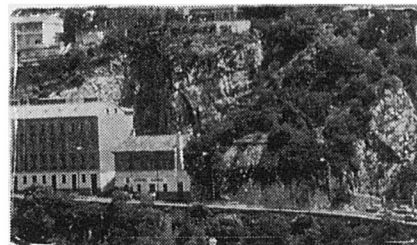
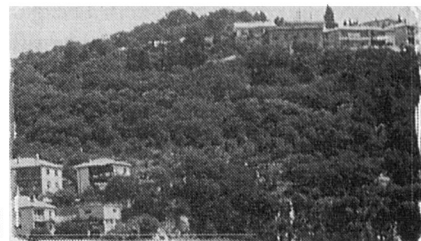
It all started in Paris when the plane was late. I was supposed to go to Zurich, and from there to Lubljana. I ended up going to Sarajevo, and from there to Lubljana.

In Sarajevo I had two hours in a busy but war-zone-like airport. I walked outside and could see a lot of army people and their equipment. I could see houses burned to the ground, and houses with bomb holes. I could see people hurrying to leave that place, and the sad faces of those who have to struggle more. I talked with an American man who said, "I have been here two weeks, and I'm very happy to leave."

You must see how beautiful this country is. Mostly mountains. That day there was great weather; blue sky, sun shining and the mountains covered with the colors of autumn trees. The weather was in contrast to the blackened ruins of what was once the most beautiful city in Europe. Very, very sad... hopeless feeling and anger for such a stupid, nonsensical, unfair war.

Of course I was late to Lubljana and my luggage was lost. After doing whatever was necessary with the Customs, the two students and I left the airport (without my luggage) to go to Maribor, where there was to be a public dharma talk with television coverage. We were two hours late, but everybody waited and the event went very well. At 11:00 pm we left to go to a place in the mountains for a Yong Maeng Jong Jin starting the next morning.

High in the mountains, with a beautiful view over a valley, we stopped in front of a very old house, still under renovation. Eighteen people were sitting this retreat. For most of them it was their first Yong Maeng Jong Jin; only three or four had some experience with our school. The practice was very strong, everybody tried very hard; there was almost a passion to it. I could feel from those people a similar anger, a good-direction anger, to what I had



experienced at the Sarajevo airport. Something has to be changed in this world!

We sat in a very small room in lines. During the meals (wonderfully cooked by Mateja) the pots had to go from hand to hand (no space for servers). During chanting (Dante for the first time in his life was moktak master) I had to chant very loudly and could not make mistakes; everybody followed me in every detail. We laughed afterwards that if I scratched my nose everybody would have done that too, but what a wonderful try mind.

The last day of this Yong Maeng Jong Jin, the chanting was as smooth as in any old Zen center. During the day we did walking meditation in the mountains. After the first walk—lead by Igor—up and down steep slopes, we decided that that was a walking prostration. We came back with a lot of mushrooms and had a delicious mushroom soup for dinner that day.

When the Yong Maeng Jong Jin ended, everybody had a mixture of feeling happy and sad. It was a great retreat and we were sorry to end it. The next one will be in July 1999, and it is planned to have a tent as a dharma room. The Slovenian and Croatian sanghas are growing and very active, and there are some Italians interested in coming to Maribor. We will meet again in the old house in the high mountains, and I'm sure with a much bigger group. Good job, Maribor sangha!